



# Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority Flood District Formation

Public Involvement Plan - Draft  
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DRAFT

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Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority

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# 1.0 Project Overview

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

For more than 70 years, the local communities of the Chehalis River Basin have worked with a variety of public agencies to find solutions to the chronic flooding problems throughout the basin. However, residents of the watershed today remain fearful that lack of flood protection leaves them vulnerable to the next storm event. Recent flood events occurred in 1996, 2007, and 2009. The Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority (FA) was formed by an Interlocal Agreement among eleven jurisdictions in the Chehalis River basin following the 2007 flood. The authority consists of: one county commissioner from Grays Harbor, Lewis, and Thurston Counties; one city council member from Aberdeen, Bucoda, Centralia, Chehalis, Montesano, Oakville, and Pe Ell; and one representative from the Chehalis Tribe. One of the purposes of the Flood Authority is to develop and implement flood hazard mitigation measures throughout the basin.

The Flood Authority is a temporary entity, and one of its goals is to form a legal entity (or entities) with a governance and finance structure. Such a structure is needed to fund Flood Authority activities beyond June 2011 and to implement the recommended actions in the Flood Authority's Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan, which is currently in draft form but will be finalized in June 2010.

The Flood Authority is in the process of forming a legal entity to address chronic flooding problems in a comprehensive manner within the Chehalis River Basin. The FA has considered a number of options for the flood district entity and has determined there are two options – a Flood Control District (FCD) and a Flood Control Zone District (FCZD) – that deserve further consideration. A third option, a Watershed Management Partnership (WMP), has also been discussed. This option provides the FA with the opportunity to take a basin-wide approach to addressing flooding problems through an interlocal agreement, and would allow the FA to begin addressing flooding problems quickly and with great flexibility. It could serve as the ultimate entity to address flooding problems within the basin or it could be an interim arrangement that precedes the formation of a multi-county FCD or FCZD.

## 2.0 Public Involvement Goals

There are many planning efforts underway that compete for the limited time and energy of the public. The public may have to make choices regarding how or if they participate. As a general rule, people are more likely to participate if they feel they can make a difference, if they believe they are being listened to, and if they can see how their input is being used. Specifically, this effort, as with many regional planning efforts is complex and has broad implications on a number of levels and has the potential to benefit the region as a whole. At the end of the day, however, most people want to know “what does it mean to me?” Our job then is to create regional awareness about the benefits of WMP/flood district and to promote understanding and support; that what the Chehalis River basin “receives” from this effort is a good “bang for the buck.” We will:

Ensure that the FA is successful in gaining public trust through early, open, and honest communication.

Cast a wide net within the basin to identify stakeholders who live, work, or otherwise have an interest in the area. Stakeholders will have ample opportunities to learn about the project and provide their input at key milestones throughout the project, and will have a clear understanding of what they are being asked to weigh in on and how their input is being used.

Engage the basin’s public in a highly interactive and straightforward manner to encourage participation and constructive dialogue.

Provide the basin’s decision makers, with a broad and deep understanding of public opinion, so that they are fully aware of the values, needs, interests, and perspectives that must be addressed through this process.

Clearly identify this endeavor as a coordinated process that will benefit the basin over the near- and long-term in a number of different ways.

## 3.0 Public Involvement Objectives

The following objectives will ensure that the goals described above are achieved and incorporated into all public involvement activities that occur throughout the life of the project.

Provide ample and meaningful opportunities for the public to be informed about and involved in the district formation process.

Provide objective and straightforward information about the costs and benefits of addressing the region's flooding problems and what that means with regards to taxes, charges, and assessments.

Commit to reporting back to the public on what was heard from them and how their input was used in the decision-making process.

Communicate the project's schedule, major milestones, and next steps at each phase of the project.

Provide decision-makers with a comprehensive understanding of public perspectives and priorities.

Clearly communicate that this project is about a basin-wide approach to addressing long-term flooding problems.

Engage the public by using specially planned events that "speak" to the community and provide multiple and creative methods for input and interaction.

### EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

There are a number of external stakeholder groups who are interested in or affected by district formation. These include businesses, residents, and a variety of organizations, groups, and associations. A preliminary list of stakeholders includes:

#### **Grays Harbor County**

- Grays Harbor Chamber of Commerce
- Ocean Shores Chamber of Commerce
- Westport-Grayland Chamber of Commerce
- Cranberry Coast Chamber of Commerce
- Oakville Chamber of Commerce
- McCleary Community Chamber Of Commerce
- Elma Chamber Of Commerce
- Grays Harbor PUD
- Grays Harbor Economic Development Council
- Grays Harbor Council of Governments
- Grays Harbor Tourism
- The Port of Grays Harbor
- Hoquiam Lions Club
- Ocean Shores Lions Club

- Friends of Grays Harbor
- Wildlife Forever
- Western Rivers Conservancy
- Sea Resources
- Futurewise
- Grays Harbor County Granges

### **Lewis County**

- Centralia - Chehalis Chamber of Commerce
- East Lewis County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center
- South Lewis County Chamber Of Commerce
- Morton Chamber of Commerce
- Port of Centralia
- Port of Chehalis
- Lewis County EDC
- Lewis County Public Utility District #1
- Chehalis-Centralia Railroad & Museum
- Centralia Downtown Association
- Chehalis River Basin Land Trust
- Chehalis River Council
- Rotary Club of Centralia
- Washington Council of Trout Unlimited
- Olympia Chapter Trout Unlimited
- Lewis County Granges
- One Voice

### **Thurston County**

- Lacey Chamber of Commerce
- Thurston County Chamber of Commerce
- Tumwater Area Chamber of Commerce
- Yelm Area Chamber of Commerce
- Port of Olympia
- Thurston PUD
- Olympia - Lacey - Tumwater Visitor & Convention Bureau
- The Olympia Historical Society
- Thurston Regional Planning Council
- Olympia Elks Lodge #186
- Tumwater Lions Club
- Rainier Lions Club
- Rotary Club of Olympia
- Rotary Club Of West Olympia
- Washington State Grange Headquarters
- Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
- Black Hills Audubon Society (representing Lewis, Mason, and Thurston counties)
- Nisqually Reach Nature Center
- The Wild Fish Conservancy

- Olympia Sea Scouts
- Evergreen Freedom Foundation (Freedom Foundation)

### **Others**

- NW Salmon and Steelhead Conservation Society.

## **INTERNAL PARTNERS**

There are also a number of internal stakeholders that need to be kept informed and involved throughout this process. The ultimate decision-makers on the interlocal agreement and district formation are the commissioners from the three counties within the basin. There are also numerous jurisdictions that will play a role in implementing the decisions that are made and that are accountable to the citizens within their boundaries.

- Grays Harbor County
- Lewis County
- Thurston County
- Aberdeen
- Bucoda
- Centralia
- Chehalis
- Montesano
- Oakville
- Pe Ell
- Chehalis Tribe
- Washington State Department of Ecology
- Washington State Department of Transportation

## **POTENTIAL ISSUES AND AREAS OF CONCERN**

The following list of issues and areas of concern is based on our understanding of the project. The list will be updated after stakeholder interviews are conducted and at key project milestones

- Concern about the boundaries of the basin
- Concern about paying for projects that address flooding, specifically new taxes, charges, or assessments
- Concern about how decisions are made regarding project locations within the basin and who will benefit from those projects
- Perception that efforts to address flooding problems are moving slowly and consist of “just talk”.

## **KEY MESSAGES**

**Now is the time to address flooding problems:** After years of discussion and planning and recent flooding now is the time for the region to address its flooding problems.

**Area governments are working together on the problem:** Because flooding does not recognize jurisdictional boundaries and flooding affects everyone within Grays Harbor, Lewis, and Thurston counties in some way, county, city, state and tribal governments formed the Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority in 2008 to work together on the region's flooding problems.

**We have a plan to address the region's flooding problems:** The Flood Plan identifies a variety of flood management projects that a flood district or individual jurisdictions could undertake when funding is available for further analysis and implementation.

**The flood authority is taking further action to put the plan to work:** The flood authority continues to take steps to put a plan to work for the people in the basin. As required by state law the flood authority must form a permanent and formal entity, or flood district, to oversee the projects that will reduce flooding throughout the basin by July 1, 2011.

**The flood authority is committed to informing and involving the public:** The public will be informed and will play an important role throughout the entity formation process. We will use outreach methods that engage the public on key issues such as determining how flood reduction projects are paid for and the boundaries of the flood district.

**The flood authority will balance the need to address flooding with the current economic situation:** The flood authority believes it is important to begin solving the basin's flooding problems but realizes that it can't fix everything right away. The flood authority also realizes these are difficult times and that it must be conservative with the taxes or charges it collects to fund flood reduction projects. Therefore, the flood authority will start slowly with smaller projects that have agreement and the greatest cost/benefit balance.

**Flood reduction benefits and costs should be shared in and outside the region:** Flood reduction benefits those directly affected by floods and those who rely on the region's roads, highways, and services. As those benefits are shared, so should be the costs. People who live in the region, the state and federal government all should share in the costs of flood protection inasmuch as they all benefit from reduced damages and economic loss due to flooding.

# 4.0 Tasks

## COORDINATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND EVENTS

There are numerous organizations and events in Grays Harbor, Lewis, and Thurston counties and on the Chehalis Reservation that provide us with the opportunity to raise awareness about flooding problems, share information about what is being done to address these problems (and the benefits of addressing them), and to receive feedback on the district formation process. With the help of the counties and the cities within the basin, we will develop a database of organizations and events that we should conduct outreach (either through meetings or by providing information materials) to and/or provide information (primarily events, such as County fairs).

### **Roles & Responsibilities:**

Database – The Consultant will develop and maintain the database; all jurisdictions will provide information to be included in the database.

Timeframe – Ongoing.

## MAILING LISTS

We will use mail and email lists to distribute information about the process and opportunities for involvement. We will compile information to include in these lists from all jurisdictions, from the public involvement that was conducted on the Draft Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan, and from other related outreach efforts

### **Roles & Responsibilities:**

Mailing lists – The consultant will be responsible for compiling and managing the list; all jurisdictions and ESA Adolphson will provide physical and email addresses to be included on the list.

Timeframe – The database will be developed in early August 2010 and will be updated throughout the project.

## INFORMATION MATERIALS

To communicate opportunities for involvement, to provide information about the formation process, and to encourage public input, we will produce a number of different information materials. The materials include fact sheets, postcards, newspaper advertisements, and displays. The materials will be used to inform the public about all public meetings, to provide information at public meetings, and to provide county commissioners, city council members, and other organizations with information about the process.

We will develop a general overview fact sheet that describes the problems, the plan for addressing them, the history of the FA, what is being done, and the schedule of the formation process. We may



develop more specific fact sheets that provide more detailed information about, for example, the cost/benefit analysis, charge/tax structure options, and Boundary Review Board process. The postcards will provide information about upcoming public meetings and will be mailed and emailed to addresses on our lists. The advertisements will be placed in area newspapers and will provide information about all public meetings. The displays will be used to convey information at public meetings.

### **Roles & Responsibilities:**

Materials content – The Consultant will produce the content for all materials.

Graphics – The consultant will be responsible for all graphics; requests for graphics may be made to jurisdictions and ESA Adolfson.

Production and distribution – The consultant will be responsible for printing, posting, placing, and mailing the materials.

Timeframe – In general all materials will be distributed 10-14 days prior to each meeting. More detailed production schedules will be developed once meeting dates are set.

## **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

We will hold two rounds of public meetings to raise awareness about the need to address flooding problems, provide information about the formation process, and to get public feedback. The first round of public meetings will be held in late-September to mid-October time frame. The second round of public meetings will be held in March – April 2011. We will hold the public meetings in 2-4 locations throughout the basin.

The first round of public meetings will be used to explain the reasons for forming a district, and the decision points that are currently under consideration, by the FA and BOCCs, and to get public input on those decision points. The public meetings will consist of an open house (with staffed display boards that explain various components of the formation process) and a presentation and question and answer/public comment session. We will also provide comment forms. As mentioned previously we will advertise the public meetings using a variety of methods, including postcards, newspaper advertisements, and web sites. We will provide a summary of the public meetings, which will include all comments and questions.

The second round of public meetings will be used to provide a general update on the formation process, and to present and get feedback on more specific proposals on boundaries, taxes/charges, and other key issues related to entity formation and operation. We will use the same format as the first round of meetings and will advertise using the methods described previously.

### **Roles & Responsibilities:**

Scheduling – The Consultant will schedule, coordinate, develop, and facilitate the public meetings in coordination with FA members and their staffs. The Consultant will develop meeting-specific programs.

Presentation Materials – The Consultant will create display boards and presentation materials for the meetings. The FA will be given drafts of these materials for review and approval.

Meeting Materials – The Consultant will be responsible for meeting handouts such as fact sheets, agendas, sign-in sheets, comment forms and directional signs. The Consultant will provide any graphics.

Meeting Reports – The Consultant will write summary reports of the public meetings and distribute to the FA for review and approval. Lewis County will post the final meeting reports (as well as all other meeting materials and presentations) on the project web site.

Timeframe – the first round of public meetings will be held in late-September to mid-October 2010; the second round of public meetings will be held in March-April 2011.

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

We will plan, facilitate, and report the results of 4-5 meeting with an advisory committee. The purpose of the advisory committee is to get in-depth input and review from a representative cross-section of interests from within the basin. The committee will consist of 12-15 members and will be appointed by the FA. While specific dates have not been discussed or determined we anticipate beginning meeting in October 2010 and concluding by May 2011. The committee will review and provide input to the district formation process, review the economic benefits analysis, review and provide input to boundary options, and review and provide input to tax/charge alternatives.

### **Roles & Responsibilities:**

Membership: The FA will be responsible for appointing members by [date].

Scheduling – The Consultant will schedule all meetings in coordination with the FA.

Presentation Materials – The Consultant will create any project specific presentation materials.

Meeting Materials – The Consultant will be responsible for meeting project specific materials and graphics.

Meeting Reports – The Consultant will write summary reports for the meetings.

Timeframe – the first meeting will be held in October 2010; subsequent meetings will be held roughly every six weeks.

## **MEDIA OUTREACH**

We will produce media releases prior to each public meeting and at key milestones, and will make arrangements for FA members to meet with news organizations to assist in their development of stories about the project.

### **Roles & Responsibilities:**

Media releases – The consultant team will draft the media releases for the FA's review. The FA will distribute all media releases.

Media contact – A designated FA member or member(s) will be the media contact(s).

Timeframe – media releases and contact will coincide with community meetings or other key milestones.

## **WEB SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Lewis County web site has been and should continue to be used to provide information about the project and ways to get involved. Electronic copies of presentations, displays, fact sheets, meeting reports, etc. will be posted on the site. New information will be posted regularly to ensure visitors value the web site as a source of timely information.

To maximize the project's exposure and to draw a large and diverse set of interests to the project we will identify other groups and organizations who may want to post information about the project on their web sites, or at a minimum, provide a link from their web site to the project web site. In addition, we will identify and post information to relevant blogs, forums, and Twitter accounts, and will develop a Facebook page for the project.

### **Roles & Responsibilities:**

Website content – The consultant will provide content for the web site and will provide electronic documents for posting.

Website management – Lewis County will manage the web site and will be responsible for all postings to the site.

External websites – The Consultant will identify other web sites to provide with information and/or links.

Social media – The Consultant will set up a facebook page, and will identify blogs and forums with which to provide information about the project, and will provide that information.

Timeframe – The web site will receive a major update in August 2010 will be updated regularly throughout the project, with major update occurring immediately prior to and after public meetings.

## **COUNTY COMMISSIONER BRIEFINGS**

Because district formation must be voted on by county commissioners and the formation needs the support of the cities in the basin, we will meet with full county commissions from all three counties, and will invite city council members to attend county commissioner meetings and FA meetings. We will meet with the commissioners at least one more time prior to consideration of the interlocal agreement.

### **Roles & Responsibilities:**

Scheduling – The Consultant will schedule these briefings.

Presentation – The Consultant will develop and give the presentations at these briefings.

Briefing Reports – The Consultant will provide summaries of these briefings.

Timeframe – The first round of briefings will occur in August and September 2010. The second round will occur in March and April 2011. Additional briefings may be scheduled at the FA's request.